

# HOW TO APPLY FOR BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW FUNDING



U.S. Senator Gary Peters

## *Through the Department of Agriculture*

U.S. Senator Gary Peters (MI) helped pass the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law which will help grow our economy, strengthen our economic competitiveness and make our economy more sustainable, resilient, and equitable.

Gary is continually advocating for Michigan's rural communities and has worked to ensure they have the support needed to thrive – particularly by expanding access to high-speed internet.

See below to learn about programs through the Department of Agriculture that are supported through the bipartisan infrastructure law – and how you may be eligible to apply for assistance.

### **Formula-Based Funding:**

- **Rural Broadband Program (\$74M):** Rural Broadband Program offers loans to help construct, improve, or acquire facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband access to rural areas. Congress has also authorized the Rural Broadband Program to issue grants and loan guarantees (in recent years, Congress has appropriated funding only for direct loans).
  - Eligible applicants: Corporations, cooperatives, public entities, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Indian tribes.
  - Proposed service area requirements: Areas where 50% of households lack access to broadband service at speeds of 25/3 Mbps.
  - Distributing funds: Funds are to remain available until expended.
  - Click [HERE](#) for more information on the program and how to apply for funding.
- **ReConnect Program (\$1.291B):** The ReConnect Program offers loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to help construct or improve facilities required to provide broadband access to rural areas. The program can also fund the acquisition or upgrade of an existing system not currently providing sufficient broadband access.
  - Eligible applicants: Corporations, cooperatives, public entities, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Indian tribes.
  - Service area requirements: Rural areas where at least 50% of households do not have sufficient broadband access (broadband at speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps).



- Key provisions in the IIJA bill:
  - Set Aside for High-Need Rural Areas: IIJA requires that 10% of the funding (i.e., \$192.6 million) be set aside for service areas where at least 90% of households do not have sufficient broadband access (broadband at speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps).
  - Broadband Buildout Speed: IIJA requires projects to provide broadband service to premises within the proposed service area at minimum speeds of 100/20 Mbps.
  - Rural Exception: IIJA allows USDA to allocate up to \$50 million to projects in areas that do not meet the rural area definition but are determined to be rural in character. The existing rural designation (7 U.S.C. §1991(a)(13)) allows the
  - Secretary of Agriculture to consider communities that do not meet the definition of a rural area to be eligible for certain funding if they have qualities that are rural. Rural areas are defined as areas with 20,000 or fewer inhabitants, and not adjacent to a city that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants (7 U.S.C. §950bb(b)(3)).
  - Match Waived for Certain Communities: IIJA waives the matching funds requirement for grant applicants that are Alaska Native Corporations or federally recognized Indian tribes on underserved trust lands. The matching funds requirement is also waived for grant projects that serve colonias or persistent poverty counties (i.e., counties that have had a poverty rate of 20% or higher over the past 30 years).
- Distributing funds: Funds are to remain available until expended.
- Click [HERE](#) for more information on the program and how to apply for funding.

### Other Funding:

- **Wildland Fire Management (\$3.203B)** – Provides funding for wildland fire management.
- **Ecosystem Restoration (\$2.693B)** – Provides funding to restore the ecological health of Federal lands and waters and of private lands, through voluntary efforts, via a variety of programs, including through partnering with States.